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# Medical Resources on the Internet

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## Abstract

Advances in telecommunications technology in the last decade have fostered the development of computer networks that allow access to vast amounts of information and services. Of the many computer networks that have been developed, the most prominent is the Internet. Originally intended to be a way to share computing resources among academic and research institutions in the United States, the Internet has gradually evolved into a worldwide network of computers that provides various services reflecting the eclectic nature of its component networks. The recent upsurge in interest in the Internet is due to several mutually reinforcing factors: increased ease and availability of access to the Internet, lower access charges, faster communications, and more organizations offering commercial and noncommercial services over the Internet.

Of particular interest to the medical community is the large and increasing

number of technical, scientific, and biomedical resources that can be accessed through the Internet. Most large medical centers have publicly accessible information, and some large organizations, such as the National Institutes of Health, have extensive databases and services that can be used by medical researchers, clinicians, and educators. In addition, many medical organizations and some medical journals are advertising their services over the Internet and can be contacted through electronic mail.

As the cost of telecommunications decreases and the speed of telecommunications increases, new forms of computer communication, such as long-distance, real-time audio, and video services will become available. Computer networks in general and the Internet in particular are likely to play more important roles in many aspects of medicine in the future.

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